

The Northern Trust

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Norton, Massachusetts, USA

TPC Boston

Justin Thomas

Press Conference

RACHEL NOBLE: I'd like to welcome Justin Thomas to the virtual interview room here at THE NORTHERN TRUST.

You're coming into the Playoffs as the FedExCup point leader and Wyndham Rewards Top 10 winner. You've made the Playoffs each of the last three five years with Top-10 finishes at THE NORTHERN TRUST. Comments on kicking off the Playoffs this week and what it's like to be back at tc Boston.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, you know, this is obviously the first I'm I've played this golf course for this tournament. Used to be a little bit different. But very fortunate to come back to a place that I've won before, and it's a fun golf course. I would say the biggest part about this place is always having the very passionate intense Boston fans, which will be a bummer that we won't get this week. But I'm sure they will be watching on their TVs come knees next couple days and this weekend.

RACHEL NOBLE: You'll also be wearing a pair of shoes designed by Nomad Customs this week in support of Heart to Heart International and FedEx Cares. Just tell us about those and why you're wearing those this week.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's great. I have a little competition with Bud Cauley, so you know, him and I are good buddies and both have our University of Alabama ties. Nomad Customs does an unbelievable job in creating as simple or intense as you want. I've worn the shoes that he did in Memphis, so I'm hoping these shoes will bring some more good vibes for an even better cause.

Q. What were your impressions of Winged Foot yesterday?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It was really hard. I absolutely loved it. It's one of my favorite, if not my favorite courses I've ever played. It's right in front of you. It's not tricked up. It's not -- nothing hidden. It's just you stand on the tee and you're about 490 yards away and you have a really narrow fairway and a pretty severe green. There's a lot of holes like it.



You have holes I think like No. 6 to where it's drivable, if you get the right conditions, but the fairway so narrow that if you miss the fairway, you're grinding to make par, so it is probably the most U.S. Open venue that I've seen. It checks all the boxes. It's long. It's narrow fairways. Going to be long rough and severe greens.

Q. Is that a golf course that you need to take more recon trips, or is that your one and only before the tournament next month?

JUSTIN THOMAS: No, it was my one and only. Obviously that's a little bit different than San Francisco but I had never been to Harding Park, and to be perfectly honest, I was tired on Wednesday and Thursday, because I had never seen the course. I usually would never play on a Monday, especially after playing a tournament, let alone winning. I had to go out Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday to play a practice round just because I needed to learn the course and get to know it.

I was not going to make that mistake again for the U.S. Open and I was very fortunate with us playing up here in the north to just go check it out for two rounds, that way when I go there whenever I do decide to, I'm not completely starting from scratch.

Q. I had a question about the back nine. It's pretty unique this week that the four most difficult holes at TPC Boston are consecutive, 11 through 14. What's your strategy for that stretch?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I didn't know that. I knew those were some tough holes, but just kind of coincidentally that they were like that. Yeah, there's not like any crazy strategy. I mean, any time I have a 4- or 5-iron in my hand, I'm just trying to make par, hit it on the green and try to get it down in two from there. You just so happen that you have a couple holes in a four-hole stretch where that is the case.

12 has played very different over the years. I don't know if there's any changes done to it or not from last year, but you know, it's played many different ways. I've played it many different ways, and 13 is in front of you, but 14 is another very difficult hole with a pretty small green for a 6- or 7-iron, depending on the wind that you get.

Yeah, you kind of need to man up and just play well when



you get on those holes.

Q. And totally unrelated, but I just saw your latest video for your PGA TOUR 2K21. Just wonder your thoughts on the game, and Shooter McGavin is in that video. What's he like off-camera?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's going to be really cool. I was blown away when I was asked about the opportunity to be on the cover and be a part of the game. I've never been on a video game before, in a video game, so to take that as my first step was pretty cool.

There's definitely going to be some characters in the game, and hopefully it will just kind of be another opportunity to bring some joy and also a little bit of competition which everybody likes from time to time.

Q. What does being No. 1 Wyndham Rewards winner mean to you, and do you feel you have a sense of redemption going into the Playoffs from last year?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's great coming into the start of the Playoffs, No. 1. Some people might argue you want to be chasing or whatnot, but personally, I like my chances a lot more the further up I am. I understand maybe come Atlanta where it's a little bit different, but at the end of the day, I'm just trying to start THE TOUR Championship with a two-shot lead because that means that I've done what I need to do these first two playoff events, and get myself in the best position.

I do know that if I get to that spot once I tee it up on Thursday in Atlanta, I will have a little bit better idea how to handle it because, I mean, it was weird, nobody in golf can say that they have ever teed up on Thursday with a two-shot lead and leading the entire field, so I don't know how to react, and nobody really would.

But I feel like I didn't handle it as well as I should have or I didn't go about it the right way and I felt like if I put myself in that position again, I'll handle it a lot better.

Q. If you had any friends who didn't know a ton about golf, if you have friends, and they asked you what the FedExCup was, what would be your most simple answer to that?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's a season-long race. You're the best player over the course of the year.

Q. Hang on a second. We're talking about, I guess the three-week stretch here?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I understand what you're saying.

You definitely have guys that maybe necessarily don't play as well over the course of the year win the FedExCup. But all in all, it's not like you can have an average year and not win and win the FedExCup. That doesn't happen. You still need to play some really good golf, or you could say the season-long race of -- you could argue the biggest events. You have to be able to perform in the biggest events, which are these playoff events this year.

Q. So getting your game ready for a major and trying to get your game to peak for a three- or sometimes four-week stretch, what are the differences there?

JUSTIN THOMAS: There's no differences in terms of trying to get ready. The only difference is you're trying to get ready for one week in a major, whereas here, I'm trying -- I'm not trying to peak this week. I'm trying to kind of start the upward climb to hopefully be peaking come Friday, Saturday and Sunday in Atlanta.

Q. Monday, too?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Monday, sorry. Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Atlanta.

Q. Typically you'd be looking in two weeks a finish line here. Obviously that's not the case this year with the U.S. Open coming a couple of weeks later. It's a busy stretch. Just wondering how you look at it compared to other years, how you might be preparing for it differently, if at all.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, the biggest difference is that usually right after TOUR Championship, you just, at least for me, I'm looking for a release, whether it's a vacation or just put the clubs in my garage for whatever. I need to have some fun. I need to just relax. That's not the case this year. That release will come Monday after the U.S. Open this year.

But it is different. And although for the time being, the most important thing is this week for me, but it's these next three weeks, and wanting to play well for that, I also need to conserve my energy and make sure I'm staying in shape and doing everything I can. Because, you know, after a week off, I have to get ready to try to win a major.

Q. Have you found that this stretch was more of a grind than it would have been in other years, given that you had the WGC event, and you've played a lot, a pretty good amount since we started back up.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Not necessarily. It usually goes the WGC and the PGA and then the Wyndham and then the Playoffs. That wouldn't have changed anything for me. I



would have played both those events and had a week off. I can't argue that it hasn't been any busier. Obviously with everything that's happened, your spacing and taking time off has changed for everybody.

I would definitely say I've played more than I would have normally, but at the same time, at 27, I hope that I could handle that okay (smiling).

Q. Adam Scott was in here and when he was asked what player when he sees their name on the leaderboard does he take specific exception to, realizing that that's somebody they really have to pay attention to, and your name came up prominently in that discussion. How do you feel about that, first of all, and second of all, what names are out there and what players are out there that when you see their name on a leaderboard, you take umbrage to, as well?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Well, yeah, that's a huge compliment coming from anybody, but especially Adam. I'll have to tell him thank you when I see him. That's a great -- I mean, any time that you get respect from anybody, let alone your peers, the people you're playing against, it's a compliment.

So that's a great feeling. I definitely feel like I've played, performed well enough from time to time to I guess I could understand it some. But it's still a tremendous, tremendous compliment.

I don't know, I don't think it's anything crazy. You look at the top of the World Rankings, there's definitely some guys I'm less worried than others. I'm definitely not going to say any names but that's just the fact of the matter. There's just some people that you're comfortable around and maybe some people that you're a little more uncomfortable around. But at the end of the day, I know that if I'm doing what I'm doing, then I'm not worried about anybody else or anything else, then I feel like I should be able to get the job done myself.

Q. Again, this is a week where there's no fans and no Pro-Ams. When would you feel comfortable, do you believe, in playing in a Pro-Am at a tournament venue? When would you be comfortable having limited fans at the golf course?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, the thing about the fans that's hard for us -- it doesn't change anything for us. We could easily choose to not have any touch with them. The only time you really do is if you're high-fiving going to a hole or if you're signing autographs. It's very easy to have fans and for us to not -- to have a no autograph policy or not high-five going from hole to hole. That doesn't change anything for us.

It's more so for the safety of them. If fans are out there, they are going to be standing next to each other and if everyone is not following the protocols, it's going to spread throughout the fan base. I don't think anything would change on our part.

In terms of the Pro-Ams, I mean, I just think you have to be safe rather than sorry. It's something where they are such a huge impact to our tournaments and our tour, but at the end of the day, the TOUR has done a great job of having virtual Pro-Ams and still having the interaction, and not having the physical touch and that part of the interaction.

I would still give it a little bit until things hopefully get back to normal. They seem like they are trying to get that way. None of us saw this coming, so I definitely can't say I know when we are going to be back to normal.

Q. I'm not sure I can remember normal.

JUSTIN THOMAS: I hear you.

Q. A question about distance and length. You've got four guys who have won multiple times this year on TOUR. Three of them are outside the Top-100 in driving distance. Obviously you're the exception. And then of course you have Collin hitting that memorable drive on 16 at the PGA. He needed driver; a lot of other guys hit 3-wood and had to dial back, but he hit best shot. With all that said, how long is long enough, and do you look at stats to figure that out or do you just sort of feel it out?

JUSTIN THOMAS: No, I'm glad you brought it up. I think the fact that three guys have won multiple times this year being outside the top hundred in distance just proves yet again that you don't need distance. Yeah, it's helpful, but it makes me cringe and it really bothers me when whoever says that, you know, the golf ball or everything needs to be rolled back because there's plenty of people that are still performing well that don't hit it as far. I mean, Brendon Todd has his game so well managed and knows exactly what to do. I mean, I have more ball speed maybe with a 5-wood than he does a driver, and that's extremely impressive, and that's why he's on the TOUR and one of the best players in the world and this year. That's why it is what it is. Length is an advantage.

But in terms of for me looking at it, I dialed back in distance with a driver and a shaft just to hit a couple more fairways around. I carry it probably five, eight yards shorter than I did maybe one or two years ago, but I have a little bit more spin so I can control my ball flight a little bit more and I'm just trying to play from the fairway more because I feel with

my iron game, if I get in the fairway, I can win more tournaments. Yeah, it is quite an interesting stat. I loved it when I saw it because that just kind of proves yet again that length is not the answer. It's just helpful. Still got to get the ball in the hole.

Q. Looking for an update on Jimmy and what your caddie plan will be for the Playoffs?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, Jimmy's doing well. He said he's good to go. I think when we talked after Memphis, we kind of -- I mean, when it happened, we don't know what was going to happen. He didn't know what was going to happen, so we discussed a lot of things back and forth and different options.

I just kind of took matters into my own hands and I was like, hey, I'm going to use Bones through the Playoffs. You take it -- the Playoffs are only two weeks from Memphis, so it's not like that was a crazy amount of time, anyway. I was like, Hey, I'm going to use him through Atlanta and just kind of get yourself ready, whatever you need to do, tell me what I need to do to help; if there's anybody you want to go see, figure out, get your tests done, do all this.

But everything came back good, and he's just changed up I think I couple medicines. Hopefully he's using this time to get better and feel a little healthier and stronger. It's kind of like he didn't want to miss these Playoffs and I didn't -- obviously I would have not rather had this happened in Memphis. But like I told him with my wrists, I didn't want to miss the PGA last year at Bethpage but it's a long-term thing, not a short-term. I needed to sit a couple events out to make sure I was okay in the long run and that's how I feel about him, as well. So hopefully he'll be good long term.

RACHEL NOBLE: Thanks so much for the time today. Good luck this week.

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